Grandparenthood and intergenerational relationships: a review of the literature

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Objective:
- To review published studies about the role of grandparenthood and the intergenerational relationship in contemporary western society.

Purpose:
- To propose to nurses and health center leaders some reflections based on studies reviewed concerning contemporary western societies about intergeneration’s relationships and the role of grandparenthood towards a successful and healthy crossing generation.
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**Method:** Literature review using data bases in B-On, Academic Google, and Pub-Med. The search was limited to articles published from 2000-2011 in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish languages.

**Results:** 45 studies were selected from 2710 articles of the Data bases.
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- Grandparenthood – Concept:
  - The whole universe exists between grandparents and grandchildren.
  - Begins even during pregnancy.
  - Step that marks a rise in the scale generational (Coimbra de Matos, 2006).

- Grandparenthood – Represents:
  - Opportunity to form new bonds with grandchildren;
  - Strengthening / renewal of ties with the children and their parents;
  - A new opportunity to reframe and resolve old conflicts.
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Transitions to Grandparenthood

Transition to the role of grandmother / grandfather
Mechanisms of adaptation / adjustment to a new identity and new roles;

Crossing with other transitions:
- Reform;
- Prolong the working age to work;
- Chronic illness;
- Geographical distance;
- Dependence on their parents.
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Results:

The main common themes found in the 45 studies were:

a) - the role of grandparents in the balance between the generations in the family (with interaction models proximity emotional intimacy and social support);

b) - the role of family lines (the mothering line seems to have more influence in the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren than paternal);

c) - the role of grandparents in the construction of family identity (grandparents bring a sense of intergenerational family identity, positively related to the well-being of all members);

d) - maintaining bonds with family life;

e) - the transmission of values and traditions.
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- Paternal Grandparents
  - Less contact and proximity;
  - More distant relationships;
  - Instrumental type.

- Maternal Grandparents
  - Greater contact and closeness;
  - Emotional and instrumental support;
  - Greater affection for the figure of the grandmother.

- Grandparents and grandchildren
  - Greater contact and closeness;
  - Emotional and instrumental support;
  - Greater affection for the figure of the grandmother.

- Intergenerational relationships
  - The role of grandparents in the construction of family identity;
  - Maintaining bonds with family life;
  - Transmission of values and traditions.

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Conclusions:
The changes in the family structure and in the family life cycle together with the new roles and functions of each member can be a constrain of the intergenerational relationships, but

The new grand-parents role on supporting and taking care of grand-children can:

- improve the communication between generations;
- bring the importance of the intergenerational relations in promoting a healthy ageing for the elder’s and a healthy development for the younger’s.
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Grandparenthood is a link between generations.

And

the relationship / solidarity intergenerational is essential to welfare of the elderly and the young, in a society for all ages.
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Bibliography:

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